

# Alaska: 1867 - 1959



by  
Robert N. DeArmond



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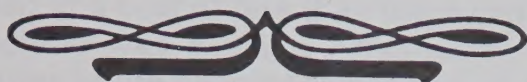
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# ALASKA: 1867-1959

By  
Robert DeArmond

The largest territorial purchase ever made by the United States was the Louisiana Purchase of 1804 which brought 827,192 square miles under the flag at a cost of less than three cents per acre. The second largest purchase was Russian America in 1867. This added 586,400 square miles to the country's holdings, at a cost of about two cents an acre. The two acquisitions had a number of things in common in addition to size, but there were many dissimilarities. Much of the Louisiana Purchase was remote and unexplored at the time of acquisition and was inhabited only by Native tribes, but the area itself was contiguous to existing states or territories. Alaska, on the other hand, was not only to a great extent unexplored and inhabited almost solely Natives, but was both remote and non-contiguous.

The Louisiana Purchase eventually became divided into eight states and portions of five other states. The first of these became a territory the same year it came under the flag and was admitted to the Union only eight years later. But the last portion of the Louisiana Purchase did not become an organized territory of the United States for 86 years or gain statehood for 103 years. Alaska, on the other hand, remained one political entity, gained a territorial government 46 years after its purchase and was admitted to the Union 92 years after it came under the flag.

William H. Seward, who as Secretary of State in 1867 negotiated the Alaska purchase, rightly saw it as an enormous bargain. But Congress, faced with a multitude of post-Civil War problems, was understandably reluctant to buy more land when the country already owned thousands of square miles of undeveloped and unsettled acreage. Ratification of the purchase treaty and the appropriation bill to pay for Alaska barely squeaked by Congress.

Governments are inclined to do things according to precedent, and once Alaska was firmly under the Stars and Stripes, it began to suffer from government precedent. Most of the territory acquired by the United States west of the Mississippi had been occupied by Indian tribes, and most of these tribes either were or became hostile to the white man and often belligerent, frequently with reason. Because of this, most of that territory had first been classified as "Indian country" and turned over to the Army to administer. The precedent was followed in Alaska. In some areas of the country the policy had perhaps been a necessity; in Alaska it was not. With very few exceptions, Alaska Natives were not hostile to whites and their belligerencies were among themselves; they took readily to education and Christianity as offered by the Americans. But while the Army was unneeded in Alaska and accomplished little or nothing, it also appears not to have done as much harm as has sometimes been charged. Six Army posts were established at first, all on the coast. The number quickly dwindled to



two, then to one. In vast reaches of the land the only soldiers seen in early years were members of exploring parties who did much to unveil the resources of the country and mark future transportation routes.

The Army in Alaska did not do a great deal of governing as that term is usually understood—a little local policing at Sitka and, off and on at Wrangell where a military post was established, abandoned, then activated again. There was not, for one thing, very much that required governing elsewhere; for another, the Army had neither communications facilities nor transportation for reaching other areas of the vast territory. Representatives of the Treasury Department—the Customs Service and the Revenue Marine, the latter a predecessor of the Coast Guard—did what they could to suppress the liquor traffic and to enforce the regulations that prohibited hunting or trapping for furs by any except Natives.



Sitka, Alaska at the turn of the century. *(Photo credit: Alaska Historical Library, Juneau, Alaska.)*



Wrangell, Alaska in the early 20th Century. *(Photo credit: Alaska Historical Library, Juneau, Alaska. Skinner Collection.)*



On the local level at Sitka a "City Provisional Government" was organized, including a mayor, common council and fire department. Provision was made for a school, and there was a court presided over by the mayor. Unfortunately, it did not endure for long. Sitka, which had experienced a boom in trade and building following the transfer from Russia, soon fell back into economic doldrums and the provisional government was an early casualty. After a time the troops stationed in Alaska were needed to fight Indians in Washington Territory and for a couple of years Alaska got on quite well without them. The next arm of the federal government to appear on the scene was the U.S. Navy.

This was a result of an unfortunate accident in Bering Sea in which five or six Tlingit Indians from Sitka were lost from a walrus hunting expedition. Relatives demanded indemnity and when this was not forthcoming there were belligerent gestures which brought first a British warship from Esquimaux, then a U.S. gunboat from Mare Island to protect the inhabitants. Jurisdiction over Alaska was largely in the hands of the Navy during the next five years, and for another fourteen years it maintained an armed vessel in Sitka, but neither its authority nor its duties were ever clearly spelled out. More mobile than the Army had been, the Navy at an early date participated in Alaska development by opening the trail over Chilkoot Pass to the first party of white prospectors to go to the Yukon and by assisting with the settlement of the new town of Juneau, where a gold strike had been made. Hydrographic surveys, law enforcement and search and rescue missions were other tasks undertaken by the Navy.

It was the new town of Juneau, the first to be established in Alaska since the flag raising in 1867, that showed its American spirit on its first Fourth of July, in 1881, by initiating a move to send a delegate to Congress to work for Alaska legislation. As a result of the Juneau action, an election was held later that year and the duly chosen delegate went to Washington to importune for a seat in the House. He didn't get it, but he did draw a lot of sympathetic attention to Alaska. Each session of Congress had seen the introduction of one or more bills designed to provide government of some kind for the northern possession. Most of them had died in committee. The delegate effort generated new interest and in 1884 an Organic Act for Alaska was finally passed and signed into law.

It provided for a Governor and a court system. The latter included a District Judge, Clerk, Attorney, Marshal, four deputy Marshals and four U.S. Commissioners. The seat of government was established at Sitka, with a Commissioner and a deputy Marshal at each Sitka, Wrangell, Juneau and Unalaska. The general laws of the State of Oregon were applied to Alaska "so far as they may be applicable." The mining laws of the United States were also extended to Alaska, so that mining claims for the first time had some legal standing. In addition, Alaska was created a land district with the land office at Sitka. The Marshal, the Clerk of the Court and the Commissioner at Sitka were to act, ex-officio, as Surveyor-General, Receiver and Registrar, respectively.



A stipulated duty of the Governor was to make an annual report to the President "of his official acts and doings, and of the condition of said district, with reference to its resources, industries, population, and the administration of the civil government thereof." Each Governor made his report each year, with varying degrees of detail; the reports were duly printed in Washington, and today they constitute one of our best records of that period of Alaska's history. The early Governors were able to report some development of Alaska natural resources, particularly the fisheries and minerals. Congress took some note of the former by enacting, on March 2, 1889, its first bill "to provide for the protection of the salmon fisheries in Alaska."

The court system created by the Organic Act of 1884 worked reasonably well, partly no doubt because there was little major crime in Alaska. The court's biggest problem was perhaps its effort to reconcile American judicial practice with the customs and practices of the Natives who formed by far the greater part of the population. On the whole, the Natives proved remarkably adaptable.

The entire personnel of the Alaska government usually changed with each change of administration in Washington, and few of the officials remained to make permanent homes. There was still a manifest desire among the white residents, too, for more self-government, including representation in Congress.

The second active move in that direction came on October 8, 1890, when a non-partisan political convention was held at Juneau and chose a popular shipmaster to represent Alaska in Congress. He did not get a seat, either, but he did draw a good deal of attention when he offered, on behalf of a syndicate, to buy Alaska from the United States for \$14,400,000, or just double the price paid to Russia. He also called attention to the great need for additional legislation for the District of Alaska. A third effort to seat a representative in Congress began on October 9, 1899, with another non-partisan convention at Juneau. The Skagway lawyer who went to Washington had no better success than his predecessors in securing a seat in the House, but like the others he had some effect as a lobbyist. In good part due to the efforts of the men from Alaska, Congress during the last years of the nineteenth century paid much more attention to the northern possession.

On July 24, 1897, the office of Surveyor General for the District of Alaska was created and the staff of the Land Office in Alaska was increased. This was of particular interest and benefit to the greatly expanding mining industry, making it much easier to secure mineral patents. Then in April, 1898, the district was given a board of Local Steamboat Inspectors to increase transportation safety. A month later the homestead laws were extended to Alaska and provision was made for rights-of-way for railroads. These were followed, in 1899, by a law extending the public land survey system to Alaska and by a Criminal Code which, among other things, eliminated the prohibition against alcohol and substituted a saloon license tax. Then, on June 6, 1900, came the Civil Code for Alaska. This was, in fact, an almost complete revision of the Organic Act of 1884, with many additions. The need for



this revision was in large part brought about by gold discoveries in the North, particularly the Klondike and Nome discoveries with their hordes of gold-seekers. And the population influx brought a return of the Army to Alaska, with posts at Fort Egbert and Fort Gibbon on the Yukon, Fort Liscum near Valdez, and Fort Davis near Nome.

The Act of June 6, 1900, provided that the temporary seat of government for the District of Alaska would be established at Juneau "when suitable grounds and buildings are available." The Surveyor General was made ex-officio Secretary of Alaska, to act as Governor in the absence or incapacity of that official. The court system was expanded by creating three judicial districts instead of one, with a District Judge, Marshal and other court officers for each. The new First Judicial Division included all of Southeastern Alaska and was seated at Juneau. The Second Division, comprising western Alaska, had its seat at St. Michael (later moved to Nome). All of the vast central area, then the most undeveloped and unpopulated, was included in the Third Division, with headquarters at Eagle (later moved to Fairbanks). This latter district was divided in 1909 when the southern portion became known as the Third Division, with its seat at Valdez, and the northern part became the Fourth Division.

The Act also provided, for the first time, for municipal corporations and initiated a tax system in the form of business licenses. Salmon canneries and salteries paid production taxes, on the case or barrel of fish. Railroads were assessed on a mileage basis for their total track; steamboats paid a flat fee for each ton of registered measurement, and lode mines paid on each stamp in their mills. Retail licenses ran from \$15 a year for cigar stores and other small establishments to \$250 a year for banks.

Continued Congressional attention to Alaska resulted in an Act for the protection of game, on June 7, 1902; an Act creating road districts and providing for road overseers, on April 27, 1904; and at last the long-sought Delegate in Congress Act, on May 8, 1906. The first man to hold an Alaska-wide elective office was Frank H. Waskey of Nome and when he took his seat in the House of Representatives at Washington on December 3, 1906, he was apparently the first man to officially represent an unorganized territory in that body since 1803.

With the seating of a Delegate in Congress, the move toward self government, or Home Rule as it was usually called in Alaska, increased. The third man to hold the office of Delegate, James Wickersham, succeeded in pushing through a bill which became law on August 24, 1912. It was known as the second Organic Act and was somewhat limited as compared with laws that created other American territories. There was no provision for counties and county governments, or for local courts at the county level or a Territorial Supreme Court.

The Organic Act provided that the capital of the Territory of Alaska "shall be at Juneau." It created a legislature of twenty-four members—two Senators and four Representatives from each of the four judicial divisions. The legislature was to convene "at the capitol at the City of Juneau, Alaska, on the first Monday in March in the year



nineteen hundred thirteen, and on the first Monday in March every two years thereafter." Sessions were to be no longer than sixty days, but there was provision for the calling of fifteen-day extraordinary sessions by the Governor. Salaries of the members, mileage and certain other expenses would be paid by the federal government.

The Act provided also for appointment by the President of a special commission "to conduct an examination into the transportation question in the Territory of Alaska; to examine railroad routes from the seaboard to the coal fields and to interior and navigable waters; to secure surveys and other information with respect to railroads, including cost of construction and operation; . . ." It was this section that eventually brought the federal government into the railroad business in the Territory.

When the Territorial Legislature convened for its first session it was in a temporary capitol, the Elks Hall in Juneau, rented for the session. The Legislature was not at full strength for that session, either; one House member from the Fourth Division, although duly elected, failed to put in an appearance during the entire session. The first Act of the Legislature extended the franchise to women and the second established legal holidays for the Territory, including Alaska Day. Other laws enacted during the session established the Alaska Pioneers' Home, created the office of Territorial Treasurer, regulated the practice of medicine and of dentistry, provided a system of taxation including a poll tax, provided for compulsory education, established juvenile courts, and established a system for registering vital statistics. There was a good deal of labor legislation, including a workmen's compensation law, establishment of the eight-hour day for work on territorial and municipal projects, and the declaration of mining and associated occupations as being of a dangerous nature and subject to the eight-hour day rule. The Territory's first ecology measure prohibited the casting of sawdust, planer shavings and other lumber waste into the waters of Alaska. The Legislature also appropriated a total of \$75,143.75 for the biennium, but at least \$11,000 of this amount was not expended.

The Second Alaska Territorial Legislature, in 1915, substantially increased the territorial payroll by creating the office of Attorney General and the office of Territorial Mine Inspector. The appropriation for the biennium was increased to \$227,540. The Legislature set up machinery to grant full citizenship and voting rights for Alaska Natives, but this was not ratified by Congress for all Natives until 1924. A bounty was placed on wolves, provision was made for a uniform system of schools, and a labor lien law was enacted. There was also a provision for an allowance for needy aged residents. And the voters of Alaska were called upon, at the next, election, to express their opinions upon two questions: whether Alaska should be "Wet" or "Dry" so far as alcoholic beverages were concerned, and whether they were or were not in favor of a general eight-hour day for all wage and salary earners in the Territory.





Anchorage, Alaska, April 1915. (Photo credit: Alaska Historical Library, Juneau, Alaska. George L. Harrington Collection.)

The vote on these questions was at the General Election of 1916, there then being no Primary Election in Alaska. On the first question, the count showed 9,052 “Dry” ballots, or 65.34 per cent of the total, to 4,815 “Wet” ballots. Under the terms of the referendum bill, if the vote was predominantly “Dry,” no licenses for the sale of liquor would be issued after January 1, 1918. Because there was some doubt as to how far the Alaska Legislature could go in regulating liquor, Congress responded to the express of the will of the people on February 14, 1917, with “An Act to prohibit the manufacture or sale of alcoholic liquors in the Territory of Alaska.” This became known as the “Alaska Bone Dry Law” and also became effective on January 1, 1918, more than a year before national prohibition.

The eight-hour day proposition carried by an even larger majority than the “Dry” law, with a vote of 10,416 in favor, only 1,782 against the proposition of a general eight hour day. As a result, required legislation was enacted at the next session of the Alaska Legislature.

The year 1916 was also notable in that it saw the introduction of the first Alaska statehood bill. Delegate Wickersham dropped the bill in the House hopper on March 30, the forty-ninth anniversary of the signing of the purchase treaty. He did so at least partly in response to actions by the Alaska Legislature the previous year. The bill was referred to committee and was not reported out.

By Act of March 3, 1917, Congress empowered the Alaska Legislature “to establish and maintain schools for white and colored children and children of mixed blood who lead a civilized life in said Territory, and to make appropriations of Territorial funds for that purpose.” The Legislature created a Board of Education consisting of the Governor and the four senior Territorial Senators and gave the board power to appoint a Commissioner of Education. The composition of the Board of Education was later changed, and there was an experiment with electing the Commissioner of Education by popular vote,



but this method was discarded as unsatisfactory and the appointive power returned to the board.

In the field of Education, the 1917 Legislature also established the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines which later became the University of Alaska. Other Acts of that session established a Territorial Board of Road Commissioners to accomplish road and trail work; initiated game stocking programs, created a Bureau of Publicity to promote tourism and economic development, and provided for the establishment of fish hatcheries and the protection and care of natural spawning grounds. The Legislature also provided for the holding of Alaska's first Primary Election. This was to be held on the last Tuesday in April, 1918, and each two years thereafter.

In 1919 the Legislature established the office of Labor Commissioner and provided that the Territorial Mine Inspector would fill the position ex-officio; established the office of Commissioner of Health, a part-time position but with a number of assistant Commissioners in other parts of the Territory; created the Territorial Shipping Board; and provided for the popular election of two Divisional Road Commissioners in each of the four judicial districts. The latter Act was repealed after a few years.

Two controversial referendum measures were considered by the Fifth Territorial Legislature, in 1921. One sought an expression by female electors, for and against a law requiring women to serve as jurors. The bill passed both houses, was vetoed by the Governor, then passed over his veto. There was a very light vote on the question in the next General Election, perhaps because few women were yet exercising their voting rights, but the majority of those who did vote were in favor of requiring women to serve as jurors.

The second referendum was to allow the electors to indicate their preference for the person to be appointed the next Governor of Alaska. This preference was to be expressed in the Primary and General Elections of 1924 and each four years thereafter. Three Republicans filed for the race in the 1924 Primary, but no Democrats. The winner in the Republican Primary, although he received a large vote in the General Election, did not receive the appointment. Although the law remained on the books in the 1928 and 1932 elections, the preference race was not again run.

Other Acts of the 1921 Legislature regulated the use, sale and possession of narcotic drugs, established a system of business license taxation, provided shipping subsidies for certain areas of the Territory, and provided for the purchase of the Seward Peninsula Railroad for operation as a public tram.

Two major political movements that took place in Alaska during the decade of the 1920's failed of achievement. One, which required action by Congress, was an effort to separate Southeastern Alaska from the remainder of the Territory and create the Territory of South Alaska. A convention was held at Juneau and an Organic Act for the proposed new territory was drafted and the Cordova area of Prince William Sound asked to be made a part of the new political entity. The



project failed to get Congressional approval and although the separation of Southeastern Alaska continued to have some support during the next three decades, there was not again a concerted effort to accomplish it. The second move was to provide for an elective territorial official to assume all of the powers and duties that had been conferred upon the appointive Governor, a federal official, by the Legislature. Under one bill, which engendered a heated battle in the Legislature and narrowly failed of passage, the elective official would have been known as the Comptroller General.

New legislation enacted during the decade of the 1920's regulated the operation of motor vehicles, created the Alaska Historical Library and Museum Commission, provided for the licensing of fishermen, subsidized annual agricultural and industrial fairs in various parts of Alaska, authorized the Territorial Board of Road Commissioners to build airplane landing fields, subsidized certain air routes, required licensing of airmen and aircraft, set up a system of financial aid to public libraries, and created a Teacher's Pension Board and fund.

The 1929 Legislature also created the office of Auditor of Alaska and Territorial Highway Engineer, both elective. The latter replaced the divisional Road Commissioners. In addition, the offices of Territorial Treasurer and Commissioner of Education were made elective. Since the Attorney General had been elective since the creation of the office, this brought to five the number of elected territorial officials.

The decade of the 1930's was the decade of the Great Depression. It also saw the end of prohibition. Both events created problems for the Alaska Legislature. Liquor regulation and control was the more easily solved of the two, although it required tinkering by a number of successive legislative sessions and an expression from the voters before it was settled. The 1939 session provided for a referendum on the establishment of Territorial liquor stores to have control of the sale of all kinds of intoxicating alcoholic beverages. The vote came in the General Election of 1940 with 6,150 votes for and 8,490 against the proposition.

The depression brought both direct and indirect relief measures by the legislators. There were appropriations for direct relief of the needy, as well as appropriations for such programs as salmon stream clearing, the stocking of lakes and streams with game fish, aid to prospectors, and road and trail work that were designed in good part to alleviate unemployment. In 1931 a Board of Budget was created to attempt to bring better order into the Territory's often hit-and-miss fiscal affairs. Revenues continued to shrink as the depression deepened, while the demand for appropriations and expenditures increased. To cope with the problems of a threadbare treasury, the 1933 Legislature created the Board of Administration and gave it authority to "freeze" appropriations, in whole or in part, when funds for them had not become available. Memorials seeking more federal public works funds for Alaska regularly went from the Legislature to Washington, and a depression-inspired measure brought the first extraordinary session of the Alaska Legislature in its history. This was



called by the Governor immediately following the regular 1937 session, for the special purpose of enacting the Alaska Unemployment Compensation Law. In addition, a Department of Welfare was established by the special session.

Looking to future development, the Alaska Planning Council was established by the 1935 Legislature, which also established a Department of Mines headed by a Commissioner of Mines to be appointed by the Governor. This was followed in 1937 by provision for an Experimental Fur Farm and a Fisheries Experimental Laboratory, as well as a number of assay offices under the Department of Mines. The growth of the aviation industry brought about the Alaska Aeronautics and Communications Commission. But another problem, the subject of Memorials to Congress, has not yet been solved: Congress was petitioned for action to prevent the encroachment of Japanese fishermen on the Bristol Bay salmon runs. Also of concern to the Legislature all through the 1930's, with both Memorials and appropriations, was a highway to connect Alaska to the rest of the nation. There were surveys and promotional efforts, with some division of opinion as to which of two routes was the better. But the Army selected still a third route when it built the road during World War II.

The Organic Act of 1912 set the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November as General Election day in Alaska, the same as throughout the Nation, but Alaskans complained that this was often inconvenient because it came during the freeze-up when travel was difficult in many areas. Accordingly, on March 26, 1934, Congress authorized the holding of Alaska's General Election on the second Tuesday in September in 1934 and each two years thereafter. At the same time, the day for convening the Legislature was moved from the first Monday in March to the second Monday in January. This was found to be too early in the year for the convenience of the legislators and by Act of April 18, 1940, Congress changed it to the fourth Monday of January.

There were problems with the September election date, too, November had been considered too late or too early; September was definitely too early as the salmon fishing season was still open in many areas at that time. In 1945 the Legislature, having been granted the authority by Congress, moved the General Election to the second Tuesday in October. There it became something of a weathervane for the national elections which followed, and the October election date remained in effect until the coming of statehood forced Alaska into step with the rest of the Nation.

The 1939 Legislature established a system of legal weights and measures for Alaska and provided for the purchase of the F.L. Goddard homestead near Sitka. The property included a number of hot springs and a hotel building which for some years was used as a branch of the Sitka Pioneers' Home.

In 1941 the Legislature established a Department of Labor with an elective Commissioner of Labor, appropriated funds for the purchase of the Wickersham Library of Alaskan publications, and made its first



appropriation for the National Guard of Alaska. The Guard at that time existed solely under the federal law and it was not until 1949 that the Alaska National Guard Act was passed and the Guard was authorized under territorial law. The war years continued to impose something of a strain on the treasury of the territory but did not require very much in the way of new legislation.

In 1941 the Legislature authorized the Territorial Board of Road Commissioners to "establish a highway patrol and a vehicle inspection service." This was the forerunner of the Department of Territorial Police and the state police system.

Just as Alaska had been out in front of the greater part of the country in the matter of women's suffrage back in 1913, so it was in the vanguard in the matter of granting the vote to eighteen-year-olds. Inspired in good part by the number of young veterans who would soon be returning to their homes, the 1945 Legislature lowered the voting age in Alaska to eighteen years. It was necessary, however, to provide that "this Act will become effective upon validation by Congress." Congress, however, did not get around to validating the measure and it was without effect. The same session passed a bill forbidding discrimination in public facilities and accommodations, created the Alaska Housing Authority, the Alaska Development Board, a Department of Taxation, and a Department of Agriculture, and provided for registration of ownership of all land in the Territory. It also provided for a referendum in the 1946 General Election on the question of statehood for Alaska.

The Seventeenth Alaska Legislature was called back into extraordinary session early in 1946 to consider legislation for veterans. It created the World War II Veterans Revolving Fund, with a system of loans and bonuses. The revolving fund was financed by a sales tax of one per cent on retail transactions in the Territory, with the tax to terminate at the end of the quarter during which the fund reached \$3,250,000. The office of Commissioner of Veterans Affairs was created to administer the fund.

The special session in 1946 also passed a bill to place another voters' preference on the 1946 election ballot. Some years earlier a move had started to eliminate the party primary, in which the candidates of the two political parties appeared on separate ballots and voters had to make a party membership declaration in order to participate, and to replace this with an open or "blanket" primary in which all candidates would appear on one ballot and no party declaration would be necessary. Bills to accomplish this had failed of passage, but the referendum on the subject was approved.

When the ballots were counted in October, 9,630 voters had expressed a desire for statehood to 6,822 who opposed the proposition. The blanket primary had much stronger support and carried by a margin of 12,305 to 3,328. It was implemented by the Act of the 1947 Legislature.

The Legislature of 1947 provided for another expression of opinion from the voters, this time asking whether they were for or against



the use of salmon traps in Alaska waters. Not surprisingly, the final vote was 19,712 against and 2,624 for traps.

The year 1949 started off with another extraordinary session, the members who had been elected to the Nineteenth Legislature being called by the Governor to convene at Juneau on January 6. This stirred up a controversy; it was contended that members of the Eighteenth Legislature were still in office on that date and should have been called if anyone was. The matter eventually went to the District Court which ruled the session invalid, but meanwhile all of the laws it had passed were reenacted during the ensuing regular session.

Legislation that year included the Alaska Net Income Tax law, the Business License Tax, and a Property Tax. The Alaska Department of Fisheries was created and a Water Pollution Control Act was passed. Also established were the Public Employees Retirement Fund and the Alaska Statehood Committee. The latter was a non-partisan group of eleven members nominated by the Governor and voted on by the Legislature in joint session, with the Governor, the Delegate in Congress, and the immediate past Delegate as ex-officio members. Purpose of the committee was "To assemble applicable material, make available to the Delegate from Alaska pertinent information and suggestions and such other assistance in obtaining passage of the best possible enabling legislation by Congress as the Committee may deem necessary or advisable."

In 1951 the Legislature provided for Civilian Defense, established a new Board of Budget, and created a Department of Finance which included a new Board of Administration with two Senators and two Representatives as part of its membership. In 1953, new legislative programs included the Agricultural Loan Act, the Alaska Visitors Association, a Department of Public Lands, a system of Community Colleges in cooperation with the University of Alaska, and the Legislative Council. In addition, the Department of Territorial Police was fashioned from the old Highway Patrol.

The 1955 session brought the creation of the Territorial Library Service, forerunner of the present State library, as well as the outstanding accomplishment of the decade, the provision for a Constitutional Convention. This Act called for fifty-five delegates from twenty-two districts, to be selected at the Special Election on September 13, 1955. A total of 171 candidates filed in the various districts. The convention opened on November 8, 1955, on the campus of the University of Alaska, and on February 5, 1956, a document of 14,400 words was signed. The proposed Constitution was ratified by the voters at the regular Primary Election in April, 1956, by a vote of 17,447 to 7,180.

Two other ordinances were voted upon in the same election. One provided for the abolition of fish traps upon the effective date of the Constitution and carried by a 21,285 to 4,004 margin. The other, known as the Alaska-Tennessee Plan, called for the election of two United States Senators and one United States Representative in the General Election of 1956. The Tennessee Plan, so called because the device of election prior to admission had first been used by Tennessee,





Alaska Constitutional Convention Delegates. (Photo credit: University of Alaska, Fairbanks Archives. Oversize Historical Photograph Collection.)

was approved by Alaska voters by a 15,011 to 9,556 margin. The plan was only partly successful for Alaska. Some of the other territories that had used the device had seen their “Tennessee” delegations eventually seated in Congress. The Alaska delegation was cordinally received in Washington but was not officially recognized or seated by Congress. Nevertheless, the three members were effective lobbyists for statehood.

There was one other “first” for Alaska in the Primary Election of 1956, the Territory’s first Presidential preference vote. Alaska pretty much followed the Nation in the results, with President Eisenhower overwhelming Senator Knowland on the Republican side and Adlai Stevenson winning over Estes Kefauver by a substantial margin for the Democrats. This was the last effective Primary Election for the Territory of Alaska. What became known as the “Lost Primary” was conducted in April, 1958, but before the vote could be officially canvassed the passage of the statehood bill nullified it.

On May 28, 1958, the House of Representatives passed the Alaska Statehood Bill by a vote of 208 to 166. The Senate followed suit on June 30 with a 64 to 20 vote, and President Eisenhower signed the bill into law on July 7. Alaskans went to the polls again on August 26 and voted 40,452 to 8,010 for the immediate admission of Alaska as a State of the Union; 40,421 to 7,766 to approve the boundaries of the new state as set out in the Act, and 40,739 to 7,500 to accept other provisions of the Act. At the same time, they made the Primary selection of candidates for Governor and Secretary of State, Senators, a Representative and State Legislators. The final selection of the first officials of the State of Alaska were made in November, and on January 3, 1959, President Dwight D. Eisenhower proclaimed Alaska the Forty-Ninth State of the Union.



# Dates In Alaskan History

- 1725 Vitus Bering sent by Peter the Great to explore North Pacific.
- 1728 Vitus Bering sailed through Bering Strait.
- 1733 Bering's second expedition, with George Wilhelm Steller aboard; the first naturalist to visit Alaska.
- 1741 Alexei Chirkof, with Bering expedition, sighted land on July 15; Alaska was discovered.
- 1742 First scientific report on the North Pacific fur seal (Steller).
- 1743-63 Concentrated hunting of sea otter by Russia.
- 1774 Juan Perez ordered by Spain to explore west coast; discovered Prince of Wales Island, Dixon Sound.
- 1776 Captain James Cook expedition to search for northwest passage.
- 1778 Cook reaches King Island, Norton Sound, Unalaska
- 1786 Gerassim Pribilof discovered the rookeries on the islands now known as the Pribilofs.
- 1784 Grigor Shelikof established first white settlement at Three Saints Bay, Kodiak Island.
- 1791 George Vancouver left England to explore the coast; Alejandro Malaspina explored the northwest coast for Spain.
- 1792 Grigor Shelikof was granted a monopoly of furs in Alaska by Catherine II.
- 1794 The first vessel built in northwestern America by Baranof at Voskressenski on Kenai near the present day town of Seward.
- 1795 The First Russian Orthodox Church was established in Kodiak.
- 1799 Alexander Baranof established Russian post known today as Old Sitka; a trade charter was granted to the Russian American Company granting exclusive trading rights.
- 1802 The Indians massacred the Russians at Old Sitka; a few survived.
- 1805 Yurii Lisianski sailed to Canton with the first Russian cargo of furs to be sent directly to China.
- 1821 No foreigners allowed in Russia America waters except at regular ports of call.
- 1824-42 Russian exploration of mainland leads to discovery of the Nushagak and Kuskokwim Rivers, Yukon and Koyukuk.
- 1834 Father Veniaminof moved to Sitka, consecrated Bishop Innokenty in 1840.



- 1840 A Diocese was formed; Bishop Innokenty Veniaminof was given permission to use native languages in the liturgy.
- 1841 Edward de Stoeckl was assigned to the secretariat of the Russian legation to the U.S.
- 1847 Fort Yukon established.
- 1848 Cathedral of St. Michael was dedicated at New Archangel (Sitka).
- 1853 Russian explorer-trappers found the first oil seeps in Cook Inlet.
- 1857 Coal mining at Coal Harbor on the Kenai Peninsula was carried on to supply steamers.
- 1859 de Stoeckl returned to U.S. from St. Petersburg with authority to negotiate the sale of Alaska.
- 1861 Gold discovered on Stikine River near Telegraph Creek.
- 1865 Western Union Telegraph Company prepares to put a telegraph line across Alaska and Siberia.
- 1867 U.S. Purchase of Alaska from Russia; Pribilof Islands placed under jurisdiction of Secretary of Treasury; fur seal population, stablized under Russian rule, began to decline rapidly.
- 1868 Alaska designated as the Department of Alaska under Brevet Major General Jeff C. Davis, U.S. Army.
- 1869-70 The *Sitka Times*, first newspaper in Alaska was published.
- 1872 Gold was discovered near Sitka; gold was discovered in British Columbia near Cassiar.
- 1874 George Holt was said to be the first white man to cross the Chilkoot Pass in search for gold.
- 1876 Gold was discovered south of Juneau at Windham Bay.
- 1877 U.S. troops withdrawn from Alaska.
- 1878 A school opened at Sitka — to become Sheldon Jackson Junior College.
- 1880 Richard Harris and Joseph Juneau discover gold on Gastineau Channel where Juneau was founded.
- 1881 Parris Lode claim staked and by 1885 was the most prominent mine in Alaska, Treadwell Mine.
- 1882 First commercial herring fishing began at Killisnoo; first two central Alaska Salmon canneries were built.
- 1884 Organic act passed by Congress; \$15,000 appropriated to educate Indian children.
- 1885 Dr. C.H. Townsend suggested the introduction of reindeer into Alaska.
- 1888 A boundary survey was started by Dr. W.H. Dall of the U.S. and Dr. George Dawson of Canada.



1890s	Large corporate salmon canneries began to appear.
1890-92	Dr. Sheldon Jackson explores the Arctic Coast, introduces reindeer into Alaska.
1891	First oil claims were staked in Cook Inlet area.
1894	Gold discovered on Mastadon Creek; founding of Circle City.
1896	Dawson City founded at mouth of Klondike River; gold discovered on Bonanza Creek.
1897-1900	Klondike gold rush.
1897	First shipment fresh halibut sent south from Juneau.
1898	Skagway is largest city in Alaska; work started on White Pass and Yukon Railroad - completed 1900; Congress appropriates money for telegraph from Seattle to Sitka; Nome gold rush began.
1899	Local government organized in Nome.
1900	Civil Code for Alaska was passed dividing State into three judicial districts with judges at Sitka, Eagle and St. Michael; moved capital to Juneau.
1903	Alaska-Canada border settled as it is today.
1905	Tanana railroad was built; telegraph from Fairbanks to Valdez built; Alaska Road Commission established under Army jurisdiction.
1906	Alaska authorized to send voteless delegates to Congress.
1907	Gold discovered at Ruby; Richardson trail established with regular stage service; Tongass National Forest, largest U.S. forest was created by presidential proclamation.
1908	First cold storage plant built at Ketchikan.
1911	International agreement between U.S., Great Britain, Canada, Russia and Japan to control fur seal fisheries; sea otters placed under complete protection.
1911-38	Copper River and Northwestern Railroad operated serving Kennecott Copper mine.
1912	Territorial status for Alaska providing for legislature; Mount Katmai exploded forming Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes.
1913	First territorial legislature.
1914	Surveying for Alaska Railroad was begun - Congress authorized construction; City of Anchorage began as a construction campsite.
1916	First bill for Alaska statehood introduced in Congress.
1917	Treadwell Mine complex caved in.



- 1918 Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines created by Congress as a land grant college.
- 1920 Anchorage organized city government.
- 1922 Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines opened.
- 1923 President Warren E. Harding came to Alaska to drive the last spike in the Alaska railroad.
- 1929-34 The Navy maps and surveys parts of Alaska.
- 1935 Matanuska Valley Project established.
- 1940 Fort Richardson established; construction began on Elmendorf Air Force Base.
- 1944 Alaska Juneau Gold Mine shut down.
- 1947 The Alaska Command was established - the first unified command of the U.S. staffed jointly by Army, Air Force and Navy officers.
- 1953 Oil well drilled near Eureka on Glenn Highway marked the beginning of Alaska's modern oil history; first plywood operations began at Juneau; first big Alaskan pulp mill opened at Ketchikan.
- 1955 Alaskans elected delegates to a constitutional convention.
- 1955-56 Constitutional Convention at University of Alaska.
- 1956 Territorial voters adopt the constitution, send two senators and one representative to Washington under the Tennessee plan.
- 1958 Statehood measure passed, President Eisenhower signed statehood bill.
- 1959 Statehood proclaimed, state constitution into effect; Sitka pulp mill opened.
- 1964 Good Friday earthquake.
- 1967 Fairbanks flood.
- 1968 Oil pumped from a well at Prudhoe Bay on North Slope.
- 1969 North Slope oil lease sale - September 10.
- 1971 December 18 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act enacted into law.
- 1973 Congress passed the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Authorization Act. Fisheries limited entry program becomes law.
- 1974 Voters approve capital move initiative.
- 1976 Natural gas pipeline proposals filed.
- 1976 Voters pick Willow as new capital site.

## RUSSIAN CHIEF MANAGERS

Alexander Andreevich Baranof	1790-1818
Leontii Andreanovich Hagemeister	Jan.-Oct. 1818
Semen Ivanovich Yanovski	1818-20
Matxei I. Muravief	1820-25
Peter Egorovich Chistiakov	1825-30
Baron F.P. Wrangel	1830-35
Ivan Antonovich Kupreanof	1835-40
Adolph Karlovich Etolin	1840-45
Michael D. Tebenkof	1845-50
Nikolai Y. Rosenberg	1850-53
Alexander Ilich Rudakof	1853-54
Stephen Vasili Voevodski	1854-56
Ivan V. Furuhelm	1859-63
Prince Dmitri Maksoutoff	1863-67

## MILITARY COMMANDERS

Brevet Major General Jefferson C. Davis	10-18-1867/8-31-1870
Brevet Lieutenant Colonel George K. Brady	9-1-1870/9-22-1870
Major John C. Tidball	9-23-1870/9-19-1871
Major Harvey A. Allen	9-20-1871/1-3-1873
Major Joseph Stewart	1-4-1873/4-20-1874
Captain George R. Rodney	4-21-1874/8-16-1874
Captain Joseph B. Campbell	8-17-1874/6-14-1876
Captain John Mendenhall	6-15-1876/3-4-1877
Captain Arthur Morris	3-5-1877/6-14-1878

## NAVAL COMMANDERS

Commander Lester A. Beardslee, <b>USS Jamestown</b>	4-1879/10-1880
Commander Henry Glass, <b>USS Jamestown</b>	1880
Lieutenant Commander Edward P. Lull, <b>USS Wachusett</b>	1880-1881
Commander E.C. Merriman, <b>USS Adams</b>	1882-1883
Commander J.B. Coghlan, <b>USS Adams</b>	1883
Lieutenant Commander Henry E. Nichols, <b>USS Pinta</b>	to 9-15-1884



## GOVERNORS OF ALASKA

John H. Kinkead	President Arthur	7-4-84/5-7-85
Alfred P. Swineford	President Cleveland	5-7-85/4-20-89
Lyman E. Knapp	President Harrison	4-20-89/6-18-93
James Sheakley	President Cleveland	6-18-93/6-23-97
John G. Brady	President Roosevelt	6-23-97/3-2-06
Wilford B. Hoggatt	President Roosevelt	3-2-06/5-20-09
Walter E. Clark	President Taft	5-20-09/4-18-13
John F.A. Strong	President Wilson	4-18-13/4-12-18
Thomas Riggs, Jr.	President Wilson	4-12-18/6-16-21
Scott C. Bone	President Harding	6-16-21/8-16-25
George A. Parks	President Coolidge	8-16-25/4-19-33
John W. Troy	President Roosevelt	4-19-33/12-6-39
Ernest Gruening	President Roosevelt	12-6-39/4-10-53
B. Frank Heintzleman	President Eisenhower	4-10-53/1-3-57
Mike Stepovich	President Eisenhower	4-8-57/8-9-58
William A. Egan	Elected	1-3-59/12-5-66
Walter J. Hickel	Elected	12-5-66/1-29-69*
Keith H. Miller	Succession	1-29-69/12-5-70
William A. Egan	Elected	12-5-70/12-2-74
Jay Hammond	Elected	12-2-74/present

\*Walter J. Hickel was sworn in as Secretary of the Interior, appointed by President Richard Nixon.

## STATE OFFICIALS

### Lieutenant Governor of Alaska\*

Hugh Wade	Elected	1-3-59/12-5-66
Keith Miller	Elected	12-5-66/1-29-69
Robert W. Ward	Succession	1-29-69/12-5-70
H.A. Boucher	Elected	12-5-70/12-2-74
Lowell Thomas, Jr.	Elected	12-2-74/12-4-78
Terry Miller	Elected	12-4-78-present

\*Changed from Secretary of State by constitutional amendment, 1970

## DELEGATES IN CONGRESS

In 1906, Congress authorized Alaska to send a voteless delegate to the House of Representatives. The following men served in that capacity:

Frank H. Waskey	1906-07
Thomas Cale	1907-09
James Wickersham	1909-17
Charles A. Sulzer	1917-contested election
James Wickersham	1918-seated as delegate
Charles A. Sulzer	1919-elected, died before taking office
George Grigsby	1919-appointed
James Wickersham	1921-seated as delegate, having contested the 1919 election and resulting appointment
Dan A. Sutherland	1921-30
James Wickersham	1931-33
Anthony J. Dimond	1933-44
E.L. Bartlett	1944-58

Tennessee Plan Delegation:

Senators:

Ernest Gruening	1956-58
William Egan	1956-58

Representative:

Ralph Rivers	1956-58
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Statehood proclaimed January 3, 1959

Senators:

E.L. Bartlett	1959-68 (Died December 1968)
Ernest Gruening	1959-68
Mike Gravel	1969-80
Ted Stevens	1968-
Frank Murkowski	1981-

Representatives:

Ralph Rivers	1959-66
Howard Pollock	1967-1971
Nicholas Begich	1971-1972
Don Young	1973-



# ALASKA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

## Publications List

Spring 1981

Available through the Alaska Historical Commission, 524 West Fourth Avenue, Suite 207, Anchorage, Alaska 99501.

*Writing Alaska's History: A Guide to Research Volume 1.* Robert A. Frederick, ed. (\$6)

*A Guide to Historic Preservation and Preservation Planning in Alaska.* 1974. Sue E. Liljeblad and C.M. Brown. (\$1)

"The Men Who Packed the Harvest," by Sue E. Liljeblad. *Alaska in Perspective*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1978. 8 pages. (\$1)

"The Filipinos and the Alaska Canned Salmon Industry," by Sue E. Liljeblad. *Alaska in Perspective*, Vol. I, No. 2, 1978. 10 pages. (\$1)

"Russian Alaska: A Challenge for Historical Archaeology," by William S. Hanable. *Alaska in Perspective*, Vol. I, No. 3, 1978. 11 pages. (\$1)

"Musings by a One Time Secondary School Teacher," by Ted C. Hinckley. *Alaska in Perspective*, Vol. II, No. 1, 1979. 11 pages. (\$1)

"Alaska: An Introductory Reading List," by Stephen W. Haycox. *Alaska in Perspective*, Vol. II, No. 2, 1979. 14 pages. (\$1)

"Trapping in Alaska: A Legacy and Perhaps, a Destiny," by William Schneider. *Alaska in Perspective*, Vol. III, No. 1, 1980. 24 pages. (\$1)

"One Way to Write Community History," by Elizabeth Hakkinen, with an introduction by William S. Hanable. *Alaska in Perspective*, Vol. III, No. 2, 1980. 6 pages. (\$1)

"Tourism, Parks and the Wilderness Idea in the History of Alaska," by Roderick Nash. *Alaska in Perspective*, Vol. IV, No. 1, 1981. 28 pages. (\$1)

"Some Environmental Issues in Alaska's Past and Present," by Janet Klein. *Alaska in Perspective*, Vol. IV, No. 2, 1981. 30 pages. (\$1)

*Russian Orthodoxy in Alaska. A History, Inventory, and Analysis of the Church Archives in Alaska with an Annotated Bibliography.* 1980. Barbara S. Smith. 171 pages. (Available through Alaska Historical Resources, P.O. Box 6913, Anchorage, Alaska 99502. \$13)

Available through Binford & Mort, Publishers, 2536 S.E. Eleventh, Portland, Oregon 97202.

*Melvin Ricks' Alaska Bibliography: An Introductory Guide to Alaskan Historical Literature.* 1977. Stephen W. and Betty J. Haycox, editors. (\$20)

*Who's Who in Alaskan Politics, 1884-1974.* Robert N. De Armond and Evangeline Atwood. (\$10)

*Pioneer Missionary to the Bering Strait Eskimos: Bellarmine Lafortune, S.J.* 1979. Louis L. Renner, S.J., in collaboration with Dorothy Jean Ray. (\$12.50)

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